



भारत सरकार/ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS  
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING,  
MUMBAI

File No. 28-11/4/2025-MSB

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**DGS Circular No. 25 of 2025**

**Sub: Maritime Security Notification for Vessels traversing through Gulf of Guinea – reg.**

For the attention of Ship Owners, Ship Managers, Shipping Agents, RPSL Agents, Ship Masters, Seafarers, Charterers, Recognised Maritime & Security Organisation(s), etc.

**1. Background:**

- 1.1. In light of a recent incident and the escalation of armed robbery and piracy incidents observed within the Gulf of Guinea, this advisory has been issued to raise awareness and promote vigilance among the stakeholders.
- 1.2. During the third week of March 2025, a piracy incident occurred approximately 100 nautical miles off the coast of São Tomé & Príncipe, in early morning hours. The targeted vessel was the foreign-flagged tanker, which was transiting from Lome, Togo, to Douala, Cameroon, at the time of the incident.
- 1.3. The vessel was compliant with Best Management Practices measures, despite which the pirates managed to breach the citadel by using gas-cutting tools and abducted 10 crew members, including 07 Indian nationals. These seafarers were transferred to a smaller launch, and the pirates took them ashore into territorial waters. The 10 abducted seafarers were subsequently released after three weeks of captivity. A debriefing was conducted at the Directorate for a total of 09 Indian seafarers, comprising 07 who were abducted during the incident and 02 who, while not taken hostage, were present on board at the time of the attack.
- 1.4. These reports highlight key findings that have emerged from the debriefing and may serve as valuable insights for stakeholders to aid in the prevention and deterrence of similar incidents in the future.

**2. Key findings:**

On the basis of the detailed information regarding the incident as highlighted above, the following key findings are provided below, for perusal and necessary action by concerned stakeholders:

- 2.1. Subsequent to this incident, it may be noted that there was another attack in the same location (*see Figure 1*) around that period, in which the crew managed to safely secure themselves in the citadel, to avoid capture. In this respect, kindly find **Annexure I** of this Directorate's analysis of the incidents in this region.



*Figure 1: Position of the vessel*

This incident coincides with the emerging trends reported, which show an increasing number of piracy incidents south of the traditional Gulf of Guinea hotspot, including waters off Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa. Furthermore, under-reporting of incidents is also a concern in this region.

- 2.2. The pirates successfully breached the citadel using gas cutters and sledgehammers, indicating inadequate fortification. It was observed that the citadel door hinges were externally accessible, compromising its integrity (*See Figure 2*).



*Figure 2: Visuals of the breached Citadel door and its hinges after the incident*

This calls for an urgent review of citadel design requirements, with specific attention to structural reinforcement, interior locking mechanisms, and CCTV integration outside the citadel access points with local access to the ship's crew for situational awareness.

- 2.3. The pirates used small skiff of fiber/ wooden construction of low profile, which prevented detection by radar. All vessels which are operating in such High-Risk Region are advised to maintain proper visual and radar lookout as well as maintain effective security watches.
- 2.4. The vessel was equipped with CCTV system, which proved to be invaluable as there was remote monitoring access with the company as well as the crew while the incident was in progress. Additionally, video recording was of great assistance in the investigation proceedings. In this respect, kind attention is invited to [DGS MS Notice no.2 of 2025, dated 12.02.2025](#). The stakeholders are hereby advised to take into cognisance the requirements of the said circular, which can assist in such instances.
- 2.5. The crew utilised the ship's Wi-Fi and internet connectivity to stay in contact with shore-based offices throughout the crisis. These digital tools enabled near real-time updates during the incident.
- 2.6. The vessel's crew displayed exemplary discipline throughout the incident. Their quick response to the alarm, effective use of the citadel, and post-attack response of the crew not abducted reflect both preparedness and professional training. The incident underscores the importance of frequent anti-piracy drills and updated crew training in accordance with [Best Management Practices for Maritime Security \(BMP MS\)](#) and International Ship and Port Facility Security Code provisions.
- 2.7. It should be noted that, due to territorial constraints, the deployment of armed guards on board the vessel was not permitted. Moreover, local Naval / Coast Guard or Police patrols were unavailable at the time of the incident to render support when the vessel activated its Ship Security Alert System and Urgency radio call. Escort arrangements or convoy movement through known danger zones should be assessed case-by-case basis.
- 2.8. The vessel was covered under a comprehensive Kidnap and Ransom (K&R) policy within its P&I insurance. This coverage provides for legal ransom payments and access to a crisis response team of negotiators, legal experts, and security consultants. In this case, the K&R response team played a vital role in coordinating with local stakeholders and securing the safe release of the abducted crew, underscoring the importance of such coverage in piracy-prone areas like the Gulf of Guinea.
3. In addition to the foregoing, the new [Best Management Practices for Maritime Security \(BMP MS\)](#) has been released, which combines earlier BMP regional publications into a single document. The purpose of this publication is to help all ships plan their voyage and to detect, avoid, deter, delay and report attacks and incidents wherever they may occur. Experience has shown that following the recommendations provided by BMP significantly improves the safety & security of seafarers. All stakeholders are advised to take note of the same and observe the best management practices stated therein.



4. The document titled [Maritime Industry Security Threat Overview \(MISTO\) dated 31 March 2025](#), is a comprehensive maritime security assessment compiled by the Industry Bodies. All stakeholders are advised to refer to the same as it outlines and evaluates physical threats to shipping across key global maritime regions based on a combination of publicly available information and stakeholder inputs.
5. Kind attention is also drawn in particular to [DGS Circular No. 03 of 2019, dated 08 May 2019](#), which instructs all RPS agents and Indian shipowners to refrain from deploying Indian seafarers on vessels engaged in exclusive coastal trade within Gulf of Guinea ports. This circular remains in force, and any deviation will be considered a violation of prevailing directives.
6. Additionally, Kind attention is also drawn to the Communication Protocol in the event of a maritime security incident as specified in [DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024 dated 10.04.2024](#). All vessels must ensure full compliance with the protocol during any maritime security incident, regardless of the area of operation.

This is issued with the approval of the Director General of Shipping.



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Enclosure – Annexure I

Note - The underlined blue content in the circular indicates hyperlinks to the relevant online content on the respective website.

## **ANNEXURE I - Maritime Security Analysis of Gulf of Guinea**

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### **I. ICC-IMB Piracy Report 2025 (January–March)**

The table from the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report (January – March 2025), report attached below, reveals a significant resurgence in piracy and armed robbery incidents globally, especially when compared to the same period over the previous four years.

- **Key Highlights**

1. **Sharp Global Increase:** The total number of incidents rose markedly to 45 in the first quarter of 2025, up from 33 in 2024. This reflects a 36.36% increase, marking the highest Q1 figures since 2021.
2. **Shift within African Region:** While the overall numbers remain modest, the spread to previously unaffected countries (e.g., Gabon, South Africa, Congo) may indicate a shift or expansion in piracy zones.
3. **Shift from Core Gulf of Guinea to Peripheral Waters**

In previous years, core areas like:

- i. Nigeria (2 incidents in 2021; 0 since 2022),
- ii. Ghana (2 incidents in 2021 and 2022; none since),
- iii. Sao Tome & Principe (1 in 2022; 0 after), and
- iv. Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Angola,

saw significant reductions in attacks due to regional security initiatives, better patrol cooperation, and coordinated naval responses (e.g., via the Yaoundé Code of Conduct). However, 2025 suggests a shift in pirate operations toward less patrolled, High-Risk Areas (HRAs), such as Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Congo, where coast guard capabilities are lower, and regional coordination is more fragmented.

#### **4. Rising Incidents in Western Africa (Q1 2025)**

From the report, several West African nations, many of which had no recorded incidents in 2024, have now appeared with new or recurring incidents:

- i. Equatorial Guinea: 1 incident in 2025 (0 in 2024)
- ii. Gabon: 1 incident in 2025 (0 in 2024)
- iii. The Congo: 1 incident in 2025 (0 in 2024)
- iv. South Africa (southern fringe of the Gulf of Guinea influence): 1 incident in 2025 (0 in 2024)

This development indicates a **geographical broadening** of piracy risks along the West African coast, particularly stretching southward from the traditional Gulf of Guinea piracy belt.

## 5. Somalia and the Gulf of Aden – Residual Threats from East

Though not part of West Africa, it is important to note that the Somalia region and Gulf of Aden have reduced from a high of 5 and 3 incidents respectively in 2024 to 3 and 1 in 2025, signifying a displacement of risk from the east back to the Atlantic coast.

## 6. Strategic Implications

- i. West Africa remains a major concern, but with a notable southward shift in piracy hotspots, suggesting that pirates are adapting their routes to evade security forces.
- ii. These newly affected nations may lack robust maritime domain awareness and require regional support to enhance surveillance, enforcement, and rapid response capabilities.
- iii. This trend also threatens regional maritime trade and oil transport routes, increasing costs for shipping lines and insurers due to the higher perceived risk.

*ICC- IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report – January - March 2025*

**TABLE 1: Locations of ACTUAL and ATTEMPTED incidents, January - March 2021 – 2025**

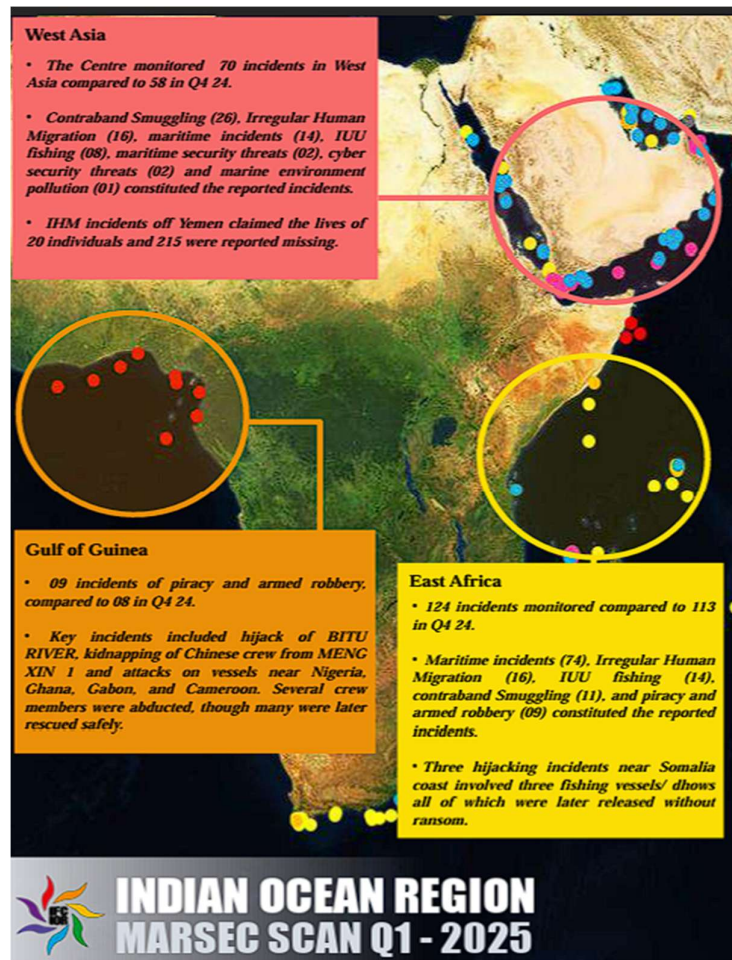
Locations	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>S E ASIA</b>					
Indonesia	2	3	4	6	4
Malacca Straits				1	
Malaysia		1	1		
Philippines	1		1	1	
Singapore Straits	6	11	8	5	27
<b>EAST ASIA</b>					
Vietnam	1				
<b>INDIAN SUB</b>					
Bangladesh		1		7	1
<b>CONTINENT</b>					
India		2		2	2
<b>AMERICAS</b>					
Brazil	1	3	1		
Colombia	3		2		1
Ecuador	1				1
Haiti	1				
Peru	5	6	5		
Venezuela		1			
<b>AFRICA</b>					
Angola	2	4	1	4	
Benin	1				
Cameroon	1				
Dem. Republic of Congo	1				
Equatorial Guinea				1	1
Gabon	2				
Ghana	2	2	2		2
Gulf of Aden*	1				
Ivory Coast		1	1		1
Liberia		1		1	
Nigeria	2				1
Sao Tome & Principe	4				1
Somalia*				5	3
South Africa		1			
The Congo	1		1		
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Total at year end</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>116</b>	

All incidents with \* above are attributed to Somali pirates.



## II. IFC-IOR MARSEC SCAN Q1 2025

The IFC-IOR MARSEC SCAN Q1 2025 data, presents a possibility of a renewed surge in piracy within **Western African waters**, particularly along its southern arc. The return of incidents in countries that had previously been quiet highlights a need for **renewed multilateral cooperation**, maritime capacity building, and broader coverage of security operations, not just in the central Gulf of Guinea but across the **entire Atlantic coast of Africa**.



The notable increase in incidents during the first quarter of 2025 requires close attention. While early data may not always be indicative of long-term trends, a rise of this scale has the potential to influence the overall trajectory for the year. This also emphasises the importance of sustained vigilance and proactive engagement.